

Bob Dylan Great American Songbook Revisited  
by Peter Stone Brown

So on this craziest of years in American history, Bob Dylan probably wisely chooses to ignore it all and delve deeper into American popular music on his new album, *Fallen Angels*. Recorded at the same studio, with his band plus additional guitarist Dean Parks, Dylan again deserves credit for not doing this stuff with an orchestra and doing it his way.

Despite the title, *Fallen Angels* has a lighter feel and is seemingly more up-tempo than its predecessor, *Shadows In The Night*. And while many of these songs are (again) associated with Frank Sinatra, most of them have been done by other singers as well, often in signature versions.

While *Fallen Angels* doesn't quite have the emotional resonance as "Shadows," it is more fun, even though ultimately the subject matter is really not all that different. The band steps out and swings more, with Donnie Herron playing viola in addition to pedal steel, and several songs feature long instrumentals, often opening the song. On the best songs, Dylan seems to be having fun with both the word play and the phrasing on songs like "Skylark" and "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," and the phrasing on these songs is quite a bit different than the folk, country and blues Dylan has excelled at for most of his career. The most adventurous of these songs both in performance and arrangement is "That Old Black Magic," which Dylan's been including in his concerts along with "Melancholy Mood," another standout that hovers around the mysterious territory of Dylan's originals.

The album opens with "Young At Heart," and Dylan is old enough to sing it with conviction, while also enjoying the construction of the lyrics. And if one chooses to view this as performance art, then there's a bit of conceptual humor behind this track.

The most convincing track is the closer, "Come Rain Or Come Shine," where both the lyrics and music fit the roughness of Dylan's voice and tone of the song is familiar territory. It's not quite as majestic as "Lucky Old Sun" was on "Shadows," but it's close.

The best tracks such as "Melancholy Mood" have a way of echoing in your mind hours after you heard them, and listening to the album, I kept imagining a lot of the songs being used in the soundtrack of movies yet to be made. Ultimately, *Fallen Angels* is for hardcore Dylan fans.